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UNCLAS QUITO 000537

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOCIAL CHARTER: GOE WORRIED OVER VENEZUELA'S ROLE

REF: SECSTATE 39428

1. At a March 8 working lunch with MFA Subsecretary (U/S equivalent) for Multilateral Affairs Jose Piedrahita, Poloffs raised Reftel preoccupation over Venezuelan attempts to hijack the proposed OAS Social Charter. The USG fully supported efforts to establish said document and sought hemispheric consensus in its drafting and implementation, they emphasized. Caving to Venezuelan demands to chair the Social Charter working group seemed far from consensus, however, while the GoV's tabled draft appeared a thinly-veiled attempt to spread that undemocratic government's "Bolivarian" visions region-wide.

2. Ecuador, too, supported the formulation of the Social Charter, as introduced at last June's OAS General Assembly in Quito. Piedrahita did not comment on the GoV draft, but shared USG concerns over Venezuelan influence in the working group and the need for hemispheric consensus. Piedrahita believed that a shared or rotating committee chair seemed more appropriate than simply handing the responsibility to the GoV.

3. COMMENT: Reftel reports that Ecuador, perhaps reluctantly, had succumbed to GoV pressures to drive the Social Charter process. Piedrahita's comments seem to illustrate that reluctance. END COMMENT.

KENNEY